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Special report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Mission in Liberia

I. Introduction

1. By its resolution 2008 (2011), the Security Council extended the mandate of the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) until 30 September 2012. In the same resolution, the Council requested me to deploy a technical assessment mission to Liberia, after the inauguration of the Government in 2012, that would focus on the security transition and develop proposals for the next stages of the Mission's drawdown on the basis of a thorough review of progress made towards the transition benchmarks, with a view to providing timelines and recommendations for the further reduction of the Mission's military component. The present report includes the findings and recommendations of that assessment mission, as well as an update on major developments since my report dated 5 August 2011 (S/2011/497). Information on the coordinated strategies and operations of UNMIL and the United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire (UNOCI) in areas near the border between Liberia and Côte d'Ivoire, as requested in resolutions 2000 (2011) and 2008 (2011), is contained in my special report dated 29 March 2012 (S/2012/186).

II. Update on major developments

A. Political

2. The political situation in Liberia has been dominated by the 2011 presidential and legislative elections, which culminated with the inauguration of the Fifty-third Legislature on 9 January 2012 and of President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf to a second term on 16 January. A constitutional referendum was held on 23 August 2011 to put in place a revised legal framework for the elections. Claiming that the provisions of the referendum favoured the ruling party, some opposition parties campaigned against them, and one party filed a petition challenging the legality of the referendum, which was subsequently dismissed by the Supreme Court. Voting day was generally peaceful, although turnout was low owing to a boycott by the opposition party, the Congress for Democratic Change (CDC). Controversy emerged because of an error on the printed ballot, and a high percentage of ballots cast were spoiled. While none of the referendum provisions were passed, the Supreme Court subsequently ruled in favour of a petition, presented by the Chair of the ruling Unity Party, that invalid votes should not count among the total number of votes when

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determining the outcome. As a result, the amendment providing for a simple rather than absolute majority to determine the outcome of all elections, except presidential, was passed.

3. The period leading up to the elections was highly charged, as presidential candidates made allegations of incitement or intimidation against each other. Many opposition parties claimed that the ruling party had an unfair advantage because of access to public resources and preferential treatment from the National Elections Commission and the international community. Members of the opposition also characterized the awarding of the Nobel Peace Prize to President Johnson Sirleaf four days before the elections as an undue attempt to influence the internal political process of Liberia. The inflammatory rhetoric was toned down prior to the elections, partially as a consequence of my Special Representative's good offices and the active political engagement of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), which deployed a mediation effort led by former Presidents General Abdulsalami Abubakar and John Kufuor, as well as a Special Envoy, General Seth Obeng.

4. Voting proceeded peacefully on 11 October, with nearly 72 per cent turnout, and all national and international observers issued positive preliminary statements about the fairness and transparency of the polls. Tensions began to rise while the votes were being tallied, however. Citing "massive flaws" in the process, on 15 October nine opposition parties issued a joint statement wherein they accused the National Elections Commission of rigging the elections in favour of the incumbent, and stated that they would not accept the results. Tensions ebbed when provisional results confirmed the need for a run-off election between President Johnson Sirleaf and Winston Tubman of CDC, who finished in first and second place, respectively.

5. On the first day of campaigning for the run-off election, CDC announced that it would not participate in the election unless the elections commission was reconstituted, among other conditions. Though the Chair of the commission resigned at the end of October, CDC maintained that further measures would be required to ensure the legitimacy of the process and also filed several complaints related to the first round of elections with the National Elections Commission, which found them to be unsubstantiated. Throughout this period, my Special Representative, ECOWAS and the International Contact Group for the Mano River Basin continued to engage with all parties with a view to finding mutually agreeable parameters for the elections. On 4 November, Mr. Tubman announced that CDC would boycott the run-off election because the party's conditions had not been met.

6. On 7 November, the day before the run-off election, approximately 1,000 CDC supporters gathered at the party headquarters and attempted to march along the main avenue in Monrovia, though they had been denied a permit because the campaign period had ended the day before. In dispersing the unarmed civilians, elements of the Liberian security services used tear gas and live ammunition, resulting in the death of at least one person and the injury of several more. UNMIL peacekeepers intervened to restore order and prevent further violence. Following the incident, more than 80 people were apprehended by the police, some of whom were injured during arrest; a newly elected CDC representative was denied exit from the country; and four media outlets associated with the opposition were closed by the police and charged with broadcasting hate messages against the Government and inciting violence against the police. The apprehended persons were released a few days later, and the media outlets were reopened the following week, after being found guilty by

a criminal court. On 11 November, the President announced the establishment of a special independent commission of inquiry to investigate the events of 7 November, which presented its final report to the President on 8 March 2012, as well as the establishment of a national peace and reconciliation initiative led by the Nobel laureate Leymah Gbowee.

7. The presidential run-off election was held on 8 November and had a turnout of 38.6 per cent. The National Elections Commission announced the final results on 15 November: President Johnson Sirleaf garnered 90.7 per cent of the vote and Mr. Tubman 9.3 per cent. While international observers found that the election had been generally free, fair and transparent, many noted that the widening political divisions underlined a need for national healing and reconciliation. Against this backdrop, the President initiated a series of consultations with Mr. Tubman and other members of the opposition about their concerns, during which the President reportedly agreed to form an inclusive Government. As at 2 April 2012, 295 appointments to the Cabinet and other Government posts had been made, involving primarily supporters of the President, including family members, and 11 members of parties other than the ruling party, which has led those so far excluded to voice discontent.

8. In the 73-member House of Representatives, only 33 per cent of incumbents were successful in their re-election bids, and female representation dropped to 7 per cent, from 13 per cent in the Fifty-second Legislature. Of the 30 Senate seats, 15 were contested in 2011; only two incumbents won re-election and the number of women senators decreased from five to four. Although no party has an absolute majority in either chamber, the ruling Unity Party is in the strongest position, controlling 22 seats and the leadership of the House, as well as 11 seats in the Senate. Dynamics within political parties have further shifted in the aftermath of the elections, and there have been leadership changes in each of the parties that won a significant percentage of votes in the first round of the presidential elections.

B. Security

9. Security remained generally stable, but fragile, owing to sporadic civil unrest, political volatility and cross-border instability. There were 26 incidents of mob violence since my report of August 2011, including two attacks targeting police.

10. On 22 and 23 December, approximately 5,000 students gathered in various areas of Monrovia to collect payment as part of a president-sponsored holiday work programme. When delays were encountered in processing payments, nearly 18,000 persons blocked several roads, stoned local officials and police officers, and destroyed property. In response, the Government imposed a city-wide curfew on 23 and 24 December. Eleven persons were arrested, including the Secretary-General of CDC, who was charged with inciting violence. Those charges were later dropped for lack of evidence.

11. On 23 February 2012, approximately 600 protestors gathered outside a local radio station in Monrovia that was hosting a live interview with a gay rights activist, chanting hate messages and throwing stones. The Liberian National Police responded professionally to this and several other incidents.

12. On 15 March, a group of Sierra Leoneans crossed into Liberia and set fire to several homes in a village near the border, reportedly in retaliation for the death of a

Sierra Leonean in that village. Liberian and UNMIL police intervened to restore order. Security personnel and civil authorities from the two countries have since met in the village to reduce tensions.

13. As mentioned in my report dated 29 March, 88 suspected Ivorian combatants were interned in a facility in Bong County in June 2011. On 13 March, 69 of the 74 persons remaining at that camp were released and brought to refugee camps in eastern Liberia. On the same day, the remaining five persons — three Liberians and two Ivorians — were detained and charged with crimes, including "mercenarism", conspiracy to commit murder and trafficking. Charges against the two Ivorians were brought by the Liberian authorities at the request of the Government of Côte d'Ivoire. Meanwhile, on 19 March, a dispute between an Ivorian refugee and a Liberian citizen escalated into violence and destruction of property at a refugee camp in Grand Gedeh County, resulting in 300 refugees requesting relocation. Nine refugees were subsequently charged with aggravated assault, theft of property and rioting.

III. Technical assessment mission

14. The assessment mission, which was led by the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and comprised participants from the Department of Field Support, the Department of Political Affairs, the Department for Safety and Security, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, the Peacebuilding Support Office, the United Nations Development Programme, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the World Bank and, in situ, UNMIL and the United Nations country team, visited Liberia from 20 February to 2 March. The assessment mission consulted a broad cross-section of Liberian and international stakeholders, including President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, Government ministers and institutions, members of the legislature and judiciary, representatives of political parties and civil society, the leadership of the national army, police and other security agencies, non-governmental organizations, members of the donor and diplomatic community, and representatives of private companies invested in Liberia.

15. Members of the assessment mission visited Bong, Grand Bassa, Grand Gedeh, Lofa, Maryland and River Cess counties, and some participated in an assessment of the border areas in Côte d'Ivoire and Liberia, the results of which are contained in my report of 29 March. Prior to its departure from Liberia, the assessment mission discussed its findings and recommendations with the President and members of her Cabinet, the diplomatic community and United Nations entities in Liberia.

A. Findings of the assessment mission

16. An objective assessment of the situation in Liberia must be placed in the context of its long history, including the traumatic legacy of 24 years of political crisis and 14 years of civil war, which had devastated the country and its people, and destabilized a region. When UNMIL deployed in 2003, Liberia was a failed State, divided among warring factions. Its already limited infrastructure was in ruins, its security forces were fractured and factionalized, its public sector had collapsed, its formal economy was devastated and characterized by criminal economic exchange, and a third of the population was displaced.

17. Against that backdrop, what has been achieved in Liberia is considerable. Between the first democratic elections in 2005 and the second in 2011, economic recovery has been strong, and the national budget has grown from $84 million to $516 million. In 2010, Liberia reached the completion point of the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Initiative, qualifying to receive some $4.6 billion in debt relief. Meanwhile, socio-economic indicators improved: life expectancy increased from 42 years to 56 years, literacy rates improved from 38 per cent to 57 per cent, and the Government launched a long-term socio-economic strategy entitled "Liberia rising 2030". Since the end of the conflict, an estimated 169,000 Liberian refugees have voluntarily returned to the country; although 62,000 Liberians still remain displaced abroad, positive developments in the country will result in the cessation of refugee status for Liberian refugees effective 30 June 2012.

B. Assessment of the situation and threats

18. Although the overall situation in Liberia has remained generally stable since the deployment of UNMIL, all of the assessment mission's interlocutors stressed that the peace is fragile and the gains made since the end of the conflict are vulnerable to disruption. While no imminent military threat of an internal or external nature was identified, it was the common view that latent security threats within the country, as well as potential risks within the subregion, could undermine the stability of Liberia if not for the deterrent and confidence-building effect provided by the Mission's presence. The main security threats to Liberia are internal, particularly civil unrest, and there is a recurrent tendency for minor incidents to escalate into violent confrontations that are beyond the response capabilities of the national police. In pockets of the country, former combatants maintain command-and-control structures, which were mobilized during the Ivorian conflict in 2011. Many Liberians still fear for their personal security because of a high incidence of violent crime and an inadequate justice system, which is exacerbated by overcrowded and poorly staffed prisons. Particular concern was expressed about the continuing vulnerability of women and girls to sexual violence.

19. The enormous risk to the country's stability posed by the large population of unskilled, unemployed, war-affected youths, many of them former combatants, who lack livelihood opportunities, was underlined by all interlocutors, many of whom were of the view that overcoming the problem of youth unemployment would advance peace and reconciliation in the country. While efforts are under way by the Government to provide some vocational training and short-term employment programmes, including through a youth volunteer programme that is part of the country's peacebuilding programme, an expanded approach to developing skills and prospects would be essential.

20. Meanwhile, land disputes remain a serious conflict trigger, exacerbated in many instances by long-standing divides between ethnic groups or communities. In parts of the country, conflict has arisen when holders of concessions granted by the Government have attempted to displace local communities that have historically held customary right to the land. Efforts are under way through the Land Commission to address such sensitive issues, including the harmonization of traditional and statutory land tenure systems and land distribution. The Commission has also been working on alternative dispute mechanisms to address land-related disputes and holding consultations with communities on concessions.

21. Some interlocutors observed that the persistent problems of civil unrest and land disputes are symptomatic of continuing deep divisions in the country. A particular concern raised by many was that the root causes that led to the country's conflict have yet to be fully addressed, including ethnic, regional and religious tensions, economic inequality, corruption, nepotism, impunity, land disputes, political exclusion and marginalization, human rights violations, ineffective accountability mechanisms and weak State institutions. If left unaddressed, such factors, combined with a population awaiting a peace dividend, pose a serious risk to the sustainability of peace and could trigger renewed violence.

22. Many interlocutors also pointed out that political space is constrained by the power vested in the presidency through the constitutional authority to appoint Government officials at nearly all levels. Without the further development of a system of checks and balances, this could create a "winner takes all" imbalance that would be exacerbated by the dominance of the public sector in the country's economy. Many expressed the view that there had been a further contraction of political space in the period since the last elections, underlining the risks of entrenching power in the fragile democracy. The situation is exacerbated by the weakness of structures and institutions that underpin governance. The assessment mission's interlocutors noted that many of these challenges were rooted in the country's Constitution, as well as in other historic issues regarding identity, religion and ethnicity. Comprehensive constitutional reform, as well as legal (including electoral) and institutional reforms, through a process involving the participation of a broad spectrum of the country's stakeholders, would therefore be required. Since the assessment mission, the President has presented draft legislation establishing a body for constitutional reform, which, as proposed, will face limitations with regard to the scope of its mandate, its capacity and the resources needed for autonomy and to conduct the needed countrywide consultations.

23. Meanwhile, the transparent and equitable distribution of national resources remains a serious issue. The Government informed the assessment mission of its intention to take action against corruption, including by establishing an administrative code of conduct for the executive branch. The capacity of Government institutions to provide effective oversight and harness the revenues of public corporations, which are not included in the national budget, would need to be enhanced, however, as would the responsiveness of public institutions to audits.

24. With respect to the legislature, while there have been some improvements in infrastructure and capacity since 2006, challenges remain with respect to fulfilling its constitutional responsibilities of lawmaking, oversight and representation. Legislators advised the assessment mission that they would require more international support, pointing out that civilian oversight of the executive could not be carried out by the legislature without adequate resources and capacity.

25. Against this backdrop, all interlocutors agreed that national reconciliation is imperative for sustained peace in Liberia, but that progress in this regard has so far been limited. While there have been calls for national reconciliation following nearly every political conflict or crisis since 1979, there is still no common vision of what that would entail. Many interlocutors, echoing the recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, stressed that a credible and meaningful reconciliation process should be more inclusive, involving all segments of Liberian society, and should comprehensively address outstanding grievances that remain flashpoints,

document what happened and by whom, provide reparations as necessary, and establish institutional mechanisms to address problems when they arise.

26. The Government has recognized the importance of national reconciliation, and has launched a number of initiatives, including the national visioning and the poverty reduction strategy development processes, the reconciliation initiative led by Ms. Gbowee, and a palava hut mechanism led by the Independent National Commission on Human Rights as part of the Liberian peacebuilding programme. Many interlocutors emphasized the need to streamline these initiatives. Meanwhile, local-level mechanisms to resolve disputes such as county-based peace commissions were seen as important instruments to promote peace and enhance social cohesion.

27. In the view of the assessment mission, the people and the Government need to agree on an inclusive process of national reconciliation that would address long-standing grievances and rectify structural flaws that entrench existing divisions. Such a comprehensive approach would encompass security, justice, constitutional reform, law (including electoral) reform, action against impunity, political reform and the decentralization and deconcentration of power, which would require clear vision, strategy and leadership. In view of the serious risk that failure to address these issues poses to durable stability, the United Nations, including UNMIL, should enhance its support to the people and the Government, together with donor partners, in taking forward a comprehensive process of national reconciliation, including the development of a coherent strategy and plan, and by supporting structural reforms, such as constitutional and law reform.

28. Each of the countries in the Mano River Union is undergoing some form of internal transition and remains vulnerable to disruption because of highly porous borders. Networks for the illegal exploitation of natural resources continue, in particular in inaccessible areas bordering Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea and Sierra Leone, and drug and weapons trafficking persist, although the presence of UNMIL deters significant transnational criminal activity. Of the approximately 190,000 Ivorian refugees who entered Liberia during the post-elections crisis in Côte d'Ivoire, some 70,000 remain, but national institutions lack the capacity for effective screening to preserve the civilian character of asylum. As indicated in my report dated 29 March, serious concerns remain about the presence of weapons in the border areas and the intentions of former combatants. Meanwhile, national strategies for addressing the issues of mercenaries and foreign combatants still need to be developed. There have been important exchanges between the Governments of Côte d'Ivoire and Liberia, as well as within subregional bodies, aimed at addressing border issues, and efforts are under way to develop a regional strategy for addressing the threat of cross-border movements of armed elements and weapons as well as illicit trafficking.

C. Status of implementation of the transition benchmarks

29. My report of 14 February 2011 (S/2011/72, annex I) detailed the following core benchmarks to guide the transition phase of UNMIL: (a) the completion and implementation of a strategy and plan for the handover of security responsibilities from UNMIL to national authorities; (b) the institutionalization of the national security architecture in line with the national security strategy; (c) the effective maintenance of law and order by national security institutions; (d) enhanced national capacity to secure and control the borders; (e) the increased effectiveness of

State authority throughout Liberia; and (f) the conduct of peaceful, credible and accepted national elections in 2011.

Strategy and plan for security handover

30. The Government and UNMIL initiated a joint transition planning process in 2010 which, under the leadership of the National Security Council of Liberia, resulted in the establishment of joint planning mechanisms, including a senior-level core group, a working group and four task groups covering the areas of border security, law and order, security of assets, and logistics. A situational assessment and identification of tasks to be handed over to national authorities, together with an analysis of the remaining gaps, have since been completed. Important tasks remain, in particular with regard to prioritizing and resourcing the critical gaps that must be filled before the departure of UNMIL, and with regard to reaching agreement, including with donor partners, on how those gaps should be filled, with timelines.

31. After considering possible approaches for the security handover, it was agreed with the Government that the handing over of the Mission's security responsibilities should be conducted in a gradual manner over a period of time commensurate with the development of national capacity. To strike a balance between the need for testing national capacity to maintain effective security and the reality of limited State authority outside of Monrovia, it was further agreed that the approach would combine a progressive geographic and functional handover of responsibilities, and that those areas and tasks assessed as most vital to national security would be handed over last. In view of the anxiety of the Liberian people regarding the eventual withdrawal of UNMIL, its reconfiguration should be accompanied by a strong communications strategy.

32. The challenge of sustaining the security transition was discussed with the Government, including the need to include its costs in the multi-year budget under preparation and to increase allocations to the security sector. A recent review of public expenditure in the security sector undertaken by UNMIL and the World Bank estimates that Liberia is facing a shortfall of some $86 million over the next three years at its current allocation of 5 per cent of gross domestic product to security, which would fall to $25 million if the allocation were increased by one percentage point. Reducing the duplication of functions and redundancies in the security sector could further reduce that cost, but there would still remain a gap requiring the assistance of the country's bilateral partners. In that regard, some interlocutors recommended that the joint transition planning should take into account political considerations and coordination, and include support for the development of national capacity for the coordination and planning of security sector reform initiatives. In that regard, the assessment mission proposed that the Government consider holding, with its partners, a national conference aimed at bringing greater coherence to security sector reform and security transition by agreeing on the context, strategic direction and sequencing of priorities and plans.

National security strategy and architecture

33. Sustaining the transition will require further progress in developing the country's security sector, which has been hampered by challenges, including with respect to strategic vision and financial sustainability. The national security strategy emphasizes the need for an accountable and democratic security architecture. Efforts

have focused so far, however, on developing the security institutions, without a corresponding development of the governance framework. Most security and justice institutions have elaborated strategic plans, with support from UNMIL, but accountability and coordination mechanisms remain weak, as does civilian oversight, including from legislative committees. Many interlocutors recalled that the absence of effective democratic oversight had made possible the corrupt and predatory security institutions that were used against the population during the civil war.

34. With the adoption in August 2011 of the National Security and Intelligence Act, some progress was made in addressing the issue of multiple institutions with duplicative or redundant mandates. More remains to be done, however, to enhance coordination and coherence and reduce remaining redundancies among these agencies. Some interlocutors expressed the need for a sector-wide functional review aimed at addressing overlapping mandates and the overextension of the Ministry of Justice, which is responsible for numerous justice and security institutions. Moreover, key legislation remains pending, including on the police, gun control, drug control and prison reform. While the National Defence Act was passed in 2008, a draft national defence strategy remains under review. Enhanced efforts are also needed to advance the development of security agencies that have so far received limited attention from international partners, including the Bureau of Immigration and Naturalization and the Drug Enforcement Agency. In addition, the National Security Council, which is responsible for security coordination and priority setting, should receive enhanced support, including to strengthen its secretariat.

Effective maintenance of law and order by national institutions

35. Notwithstanding the important progress achieved, Liberian security agencies are still not able to maintain stability without the support of UNMIL. The most sobering assessments were made of the Liberian National Police. UNMIL has helped the Government to train and deploy 4,200 police officers, 17 per cent of whom are women. While most interlocutors observed that the police service should expand to 8,000 officers before UNMIL withdraws, others stressed that improving the quality of the service was of greater concern than increasing its strength. Among the challenges identified were poor conditions of service, which limit the ability to attract, recruit and retain qualified personnel; difficulties in building the institutional and management framework of the police; and inadequate transport, communications equipment and infrastructure, which were common to all security agencies. Some improvements were noted in the implementation of projects, but progress was mostly limited to Monrovia owing to limited resources. In many counties, while county security mechanisms have improved the coordination of security actors, police deployment does not extend to all districts, visible patrols are rare and community policing forums remain weak. Many interlocutors observed that the unprofessional practices of some officers have undermined public trust in the service. Concerns also remain about the disproportionate use of force against civilians when the police respond to public disorder.

36. The Emergency Response Unit of the national police has 321 officers, out of an initial planned strength of 500. Further recruitment into the unit was paused in 2009, in view of the diminishing pool of eligible recruits and concerns about performance, command structure and sustainability. It has since achieved a degree of operational independence, and performed well when deployed to the border area with Côte d'Ivoire in the wake of the Ivorian crisis, but the unit remains dependent on UNMIL to

respond quickly. In view of the need to enhance capacity to respond to public disorder, the expansion of the Police Support Unit was prioritized in 2010. So far, 681 officers have been trained and deployed, out of a target of 1,000 officers by the end of 2011. While some interlocutors were of the view that the unit should be expanded to 2,000 officers over the next three years to prepare for the security transition, others had serious reservations about the feasibility of this rapid expansion because of limited resources, a lack of qualified candidates, and insufficient infrastructure, mobility and weapons. The Police Support Unit plans to deploy to the five regional justice and security hubs being established by the Government of Liberia under the peacebuilding programme, to provide backup for the unarmed officers deployed in the counties and districts. An initial deployment of 70 officers to the hub under construction in Gbarnga was completed in October 2011, and it is expected that the full complement of police, immigration, justice and corrections personnel will be in place by June 2012. Four additional hubs will be constructed.

37. Important achievements in building capacity have been realized at the National Police Training Academy and efforts are under way to expand it into a training institute for all of the security services. In-service training centres at the regional hubs are also planned. The Academy is able to train only 300 officers per year, however, and even with extraordinary measures, which some interlocutors fear would negatively affect the quality of training, a maximum of 600 officers could be trained per year. Realizing plans to increase the police force to 8,000 would therefore take years because of the Academy's limited capacity.

38. Several reasons for the deficiencies facing the police were identified, including shortcomings in the mentoring by UNMIL police advisers due to a shortage of specialist trainers. There is also a need for considerable additional donor support for all security agencies to develop their infrastructure in the counties and districts and to provide sufficient equipment, transport and communications. These needs will be compounded in view of the security transition. The Government will need to include in its budget not only funds for the operational effectiveness of the service, but also for capital investment, maintenance and further development, and may need to explore with its bilateral partners options for enhanced assistance.

39. The strengthening of security institutions must be accompanied by commensurate efforts to develop the justice and corrections sectors, as continued weaknesses in these sectors undermine the credibility and effectiveness of the police. Significant progress has been made since 2003, including the development of national training capacities and prison procedures and efforts to harmonize the formal and customary justice systems. Systemic challenges such as an outdated legal framework and the absence of accountability mechanisms remain, however, although there has been slow progress in legislative reform and in implementing international human rights treaties. Severe limitations in capacity and infrastructure add to the challenges facing the justice and corrections systems. As a result, they are characterized by delays, high levels of pretrial detention, prison disturbances, overcrowded prisons and jailbreaks.

40. Efforts to address these issues are ongoing through various Government initiatives, but much remains to be done before the justice and corrections systems work effectively to provide equitable access to justice for all people. In addition, the Independent National Commission on Human Rights must begin to effectively implement its mandate to advocate for human rights issues and monitor and

investigate alleged abuses. The Government will also need to begin planning for the assumption of responsibility for security at all corrections facilities, including the two for which UNMIL currently provides security. In view of the interconnection between justice, corrections and police, it will be essential to address rule of law holistically during the coming period.

National capacity to control and secure the borders

41. Some important gains have been made in developing national capacity to control and secure the country's borders. The Bureau of Immigration and Naturalization is deployed at 36 official crossing points and, as there is limited capacity to deploy to some 176 unofficial entry points, the Bureau monitors movements from strategic positions inland. Through the Justice and Security Trust Fund of the United Nations Development Programme, the Bureau was provided with uniforms, equipment, vehicles and basic communications to facilitate the establishment of a patrol unit comprising 128 officers covering the four counties bordering Côte d'Ivoire. While progress has been achieved in implementing a strategic plan to strengthen operational and administrative effectiveness, the reform of the institution is lagging. Some officers have been trained in Ghana, but so far there has been limited financial or technical support for the Bureau from international partners, and it has yet to deactivate unqualified personnel. Mentoring support from UNMIL, which currently has only 16 immigration officers, has also been limited so far.

42. The Armed Forces of Liberia are now projected to be operational in 2014. All interlocutors expressed disparate views about the future role and mandate of the armed forces, including with respect to border operations, for which they currently do not have the appropriate training or equipment. At present, the strength of the army stands at 1,982 troops, including an engineering company, military police and coast guard. Attrition is high, at some 10 per cent, and discipline is of serious concern. Its development is constrained by limited opportunities and resources to conduct practice operations as needed to sustain training and build skills. The Liberian Coast Guard, which has 51 personnel, is nearing operational independence, but its biweekly patrols have yet to expand to other major ports besides Monrovia.

Extension of State authority throughout the country

43. Some progress has been made in extending State authority throughout the country. Administration buildings have been established in all county capitals and officials are receiving regular salaries. The overall capacity of the State to deliver services to rural communities remains extremely limited, however, and in most areas of the country the Government is not present outside of the county capitals. There also remains a sense of mistrust between the population and officials, whose capacity is often limited despite efforts to enhance good governance. Meanwhile, local officials generally lack the capacity to manage funds and have few resources at their disposal. While efforts to establish county-level coordination mechanisms, including for security, have been initiated, their effectiveness has been limited because reporting lines are still directed to Monrovia.

44. In January, the Government adopted a national policy on decentralization, which set out a blueprint for administrative, political and economic governance reform until 2020. Initial priorities are to rationalize local structures, establish a legal framework, and strengthen local institutions and their financial management

capacity. Technical support for the policy is being provided through the $50 million Liberia National Decentralization and Local Development Programme, designed jointly by the Government, the European Union and the United Nations. While the national programme will eventually cover all counties, it has so far been piloted in nine counties. In addition, several initiatives are under way to build capacity in the public sector. The United States Agency for International Development is funding a five-year, $44.5 million government and economic management support programme, which aims to support the strengthening of concession monitoring and management, the development of electronic payment systems for the central bank, the strengthening of management systems and support for county administrations.

45. The infrastructure of Liberia is poor, leaving many areas, particularly in the south-east, nearly inaccessible by land in the rainy season. Government officials and security personnel depend on UNMIL for access, while UNMIL also undertakes maintenance to help keep major roads open for its operations. Programmes are under way to strengthen transport infrastructure and develop the sector's institutional framework, but they are advancing slowly and will not provide year-round land access to all counties in the near future. It will therefore be necessary for the Government to initiate discussions with its partners to develop options for enhancing access to the interior in preparation for the Mission's withdrawal.

Peaceful, credible and accepted national elections

46. As discussed in paragraphs 2 to 8 above, the assessment mission found that benchmark relating to elections had been achieved. In view of the controversies surrounding each of the electoral events, which were mitigated by international actors, many interlocutors stressed the urgency of reforms, including constitutional and electoral reforms, that would improve perceptions of the transparency and fairness of elections and support efforts to strengthen political parties and the political party system.

IV. Proposed adjustments to the United Nations Mission in Liberia

47. Liberia is still far from attaining a steady state of security with national institutions that are able to maintain security independently of a peacekeeping mission. So far, none of the country's security institutions is operationally independent, and the Government continues to face challenges to develop and sustain these institutions. It is therefore recommended that, in the light of the limited progress made towards achieving the transition benchmarks, coupled with the fragility of the prevailing peace, UNMIL should be reconfigured on the basis of a gradual drawdown strategy, with reductions commensurate to the building of national capacity.

Military component

48. As elaborated in my previous reports, the adjustments to the UNMIL military component in 2006, together with the drawdown conducted from 2007 to 2010, reduced the Mission's troop strength from 15,250 military personnel to its current authorized strength of 7,952 troops. The Mission's force comprises seven infantry battalions deployed in two sectors, including a battalion-sized quick reaction force

(5,156 troops); force headquarters (84 staff officers); enabling units (2,579 personnel); and 133 military observers.

49. In developing its recommendations for the next stage of the Mission's military drawdown, the assessment mission conducted a thorough threat assessment, examined the Government's capacity to respond effectively to security threats, analysed the posture and composition of the UNMIL military component, and considered lessons learned from previous adjustments to the force. It is therefore recommended, on the basis of current and projected threats, none of which are of a military nature, that four infantry battalions and related enablers, comprising approximately 4,200 troops, could be repatriated in three phases between August 2012 and July 2015, leaving the Mission's military strength at approximately 3,750 troops, including battalions from ECOWAS countries and appropriate enablers. Major military equipment no longer required for operations could be repatriated, including one aviation unit of three armed helicopters, which could be relocated to UNOCI, as recommended in my report of 29 March.

50. During this period, UNMIL would gradually reconfigure and consolidate the residual force in Monrovia and along the border areas, in particular along the border with Côte d'Ivoire. It would also adopt a more mobile posture with quick reaction capability, requiring the retention of all of its current military utility helicopters, taking into account that, once the implementation of the proposals begins, UNMIL will no longer have troops in all counties. Any further significant changes in the Mission's deployment locations would involve consultation with the Government and other concerned stakeholders.

51. In addition, it is recommended that options be explored for an over-the-horizon arrangement in the light of the Mission's downsizing, as the modalities and financing of any such option would have to be agreed in advance. Options for the rapid reinforcement of UNMIL by UNOCI through inter-mission cooperation arrangements in accordance with Security Council resolution 1609 (2005) and subsequent resolutions would be drawn upon as required.

Police component

52. The drawdown of the UNMIL police component has been frozen since 2008 in view of the challenges encountered in building an operationally independent national police service. Its authorized strength stands at 1,375 personnel, including 498 police advisers, 845 officers in seven formed police units, and 32 corrections officers.

53. Given the lack of national capacity to maintain public order, it is recommended that no reduction be made to the Mission's police component, but it would be necessary to make adjustments to prioritize the mentoring of the national security services, especially the police and immigration services, to expedite their readiness to assume security responsibilities. It is further recommended that the number of UNMIL formed police units be increased by up to three additional units, from the current strength of seven, in order to build the confidence of the people and mitigate the effect of any potential security vacuum resulting from the drawdown of UNMIL troops in the light of the limited crowd-control capacity of the national police. The precise needs would be assessed on the basis of the evolving situation during the military drawdown.

54. Notwithstanding the considerable investment made in developing the national police, the serious shortcomings require a more coordinated and enhanced effort by

all partners, including the Government of Liberia, the national police leadership, UNMIL and donor partners. It would also be essential for police-contributing countries to provide UNMIL with qualified specialist advisers to enhance mentoring in priority areas, including planning and management; human resources; administration; public information; forensics; crime investigation; specialized crime enforcement/investigation, including for sexual and gender-based violence; crime and data analysis; intelligence; border management; internal affairs; professional standards; and project management.

Civilian component

55. In order to support the evolving priorities in Liberia, UNMIL would adjust its civilian component so that it could provide enhanced assistance for, in particular, the strategic planning and management of the transition process; national reconciliation, including the constitutional reform and decentralization processes; and strategic and technical support for the development of the security and justice sectors. The mission will also continue to support the Government in strengthening democratic institutions and extending its authority and services throughout the country. An enhanced United Nations civilian presence throughout the country would be important, including as a confidence-building measure.

56. UNMIL and the United Nations country team have begun the process of identifying the Mission's civilian responsibilities, and the country team is conducting a capacity assessment focused on identifying comparative advantages. The assessment mission found, however, that the country team would probably not be in a position to assume most of the Mission's civilian functions. Planning should therefore focus on transferring functions to Liberian and non-United Nations partners. The country team would also need to consider the logistical requirements for programme implementation after the Mission's withdrawal.

Support considerations

57. The rainy season, from May to October each year, presents unique challenges for UNMIL in terms of its logistical requirements, as the country's roads become impassable and cannot sustain major logistics movements, and flight operations are also significantly limited. This presents particular challenges to implementing major adjustments to the Mission's configuration, making it necessary to carefully plan and sequence repatriation, reconfiguration and deployment to maximize movements during the short dry season. In view of the logistical challenges of mobilizing the force, implementing the adjustments and carrying out its normal logistics operations, UNMIL would need to retain critical enabling capabilities, including heavy-lift and other air capabilities, sea transportation, engineering capacities and medical facilities.

58. As a part of its long-term strategy for future liquidation, the Mission has begun environmental clean-up activities, as well as the write-off and disposal of United Nations-owned equipment. Through the joint transition working group, UNMIL and the Government have identified the associated logistical functions that would cease after the Mission's withdrawal, the tasks that would need to be assumed by the Government, and gaps in resources. The Government has also requested that it receive vacated UNMIL installations as the Mission draws down.

Safety and security of personnel

59. Civil unrest and crime continue to pose major threats to United Nations personnel operating in Liberia, and armed robbery is an increasing trend. The Government has the primary responsibility for ensuring the security and safety of United Nations personnel and assets, but it is still in the process of developing its capacity. Currently, the risk to United Nations civilian personnel is mitigated by the presence of UNMIL troops deployed throughout the country, but, once the recommended drawdown commences, that security umbrella will no longer extend to all counties. As part of the assessment mission, a full security assessment was conducted in order to determine what alternative civilian security arrangements would be required in areas without UNMIL troops so that the United Nations could maintain a civilian presence throughout the country. In that regard, mitigation measures would include revised minimum operating security standards in areas without UNMIL troops and enhanced United Nations civilian security capacity.

V. Observations

60. The elections of 2011 — the country's second post-conflict elections — were a major milestone for the post-conflict recovery of Liberia. I wish to commend the people of Liberia for peacefully engaging in the democratic process, and the National Elections Commission for successfully organizing the elections and referendum. I welcome also the constructive role played by the country's international partners in facilitating an environment conducive to peaceful elections, in particular, ECOWAS and all organizations that provided international observers.

61. The controversy that accompanied the electoral process has however underlined the need for national healing, including by pursuing reforms that would improve perceptions of the legitimacy, transparency, fairness and inclusiveness of elections. Equally, democratic institutions such as empowered opposition parties and a free media have an important role to play in ensuring that all Liberians have a meaningful stake in the political, social and institutional fabric of the country, irrespective of their political views.

62. Much has been achieved to enhance peace, promote economic recovery and social advancement and strengthen regional cooperation under the leadership of President Johnson Sirleaf. The gains made so far are fragile, however, and will remain vulnerable to reversal so long as the sociopolitical underpinnings of governance have not found common understanding among all Liberians. Building credible and effective institutions, particularly in the security and rule of law sectors, will require progress in overcoming the root causes of the country's conflict, including structural inequalities. Considerable political will and commitment is essential from all stakeholders, and I therefore call on the people and the Government of Liberia to continue their efforts to strengthen the foundations of democracy, and for international partners to stay the course in Liberia and support national efforts to consolidate the conditions for lasting peace and development.

63. Now is the time for the people and the Government of Liberia to place national reconciliation at the centre of the peace process, as sustaining the hard-won peace will require addressing the same potentially contentious issues that contributed to the country's conflict. A participatory process involving the broad spectrum of stakeholders is critical in this regard. I would therefore urge all the citizens of

Liberia, including civil society, political parties and religious, traditional and political leaders, to engage in sustained efforts aimed at forging a national consensus on important issues such as constitutional reform, decentralization, security, access to justice, and human rights. I further call for the reinvigoration of the Independent National Commission on Human Rights, so that it is able to fulfil its mandated responsibilities.

64. The continuing stability of Liberia will also depend on the evolution of the situation in the subregion, and the development of national and regional capacities to respond to subregional threats to peace and security, which remain of serious concern. I wish to reiterate the readiness of the United Nations, including through its presences in West Africa, to support initiatives fostered in the context of the Mano River Union and ECOWAS.

65. I welcome the progress achieved so far in planning for the security transition, with the constructive engagement of the Government of Liberia. Now that a strategic approach for implementing the handover of the security responsibilities of UNMIL to national authorities has been agreed, it will be necessary to elaborate a detailed plan, with clear timelines, and an effective communications strategy. To be sustainable, the transition planning process should take into account broad challenges beyond security, including governance and the rule of law, as well as the political context. This will require strong leadership and more resources to reform and develop the justice system, expand its accessibility to the population, and rid it of corruption and discriminatory laws, while also addressing the needs of the prison system. I call on all stakeholders, including the Government, the United Nations and multilateral and bilateral partners, to enhance their efforts in those areas, building on the important frameworks already in place, including the country's peacebuilding programme and justice and security programme. UNMIL would make appropriate internal adjustments, and I recommend that it have a specific mandate to support the people and the Government in taking forward the identified priorities, including national reconciliation, constitutional reform and decentralization, while enhancing its support for security sector and rule of law reforms. My Special Representative will continue to engage in good offices in support of these and other critical processes.

66. While Liberia no longer faces any military threat, the country still has significant challenges because of its limited national security capacity, as well as the potentially destabilizing factors identified in the present report. I therefore recommend a gradual reduction of UNMIL by approximately 4,200 troops in three phases between 2012 and 2015, leaving thereafter a residual presence of approximately 3,750 troops.

67. I am concerned about the challenges encountered in building a professional, democratic national security sector, and I call on the Government of Liberia and all of its partners to redouble their efforts to build strong security agencies, underpinned by effective oversight mechanisms, which have the trust and confidence of the population. In view of these continued challenges, I recommend that the police component of UNMIL maintain its current strength of 498 advisers and 845 officers in seven formed police units, and be authorized to add up to three additional formed police units as needed over the next three years. I wish to reiterate my prior appeal to police-contributing countries to provide UNMIL with experienced police officers with the required specialized skills.

68. The situation will be reviewed regularly to assess the implementation of the Mission's reconfiguration. Once the next stage of the UNMIL military drawdown

has been completed, in mid-2015, I recommend that a further comprehensive assessment be conducted that would develop recommendations for the future of UNMIL and options for a possible successor presence, on the basis of the situation in the country as well as progress achieved in building national capacity to maintain peace and security.

69. I welcome the strong partnership between the United Nations and the Government of Liberia, which has permitted many of the gains made to date. UNMIL will continue to strive to meet the strategic goal set by the Security Council, namely assisting Liberia in achieving a steady state of security with national security institutions that are able to sustain stability independently of the peacekeeping mission. Liberia will also require continued, long-term support for developing and sustaining these institutions, however, and should start now to explore bilateral or regional support arrangements in preparation for the withdrawal of UNMIL, while UNMIL should enhance its coordination of international assistance to promote the coherence of interventions in critical priority areas.

70. In conclusion, I wish to express my sincere gratitude to my acting Special Representative for Liberia, Moustapha Soumaré, and the men and women of UNMIL and the United Nations country team for their commitment in supporting the peace consolidation efforts of Liberia. I also wish to express my appreciation to Ellen Margrethe Løj, who served admirably as my Special Representative in Liberia for four years. I thank also all troop- and police-contributing countries, ECOWAS, the African Union, the International Contact Group for the Mano River Basin, the Peacebuilding Commission, humanitarian organizations and multilateral and bilateral donors, as well as non-governmental organizations, for their invaluable support and important contributions.

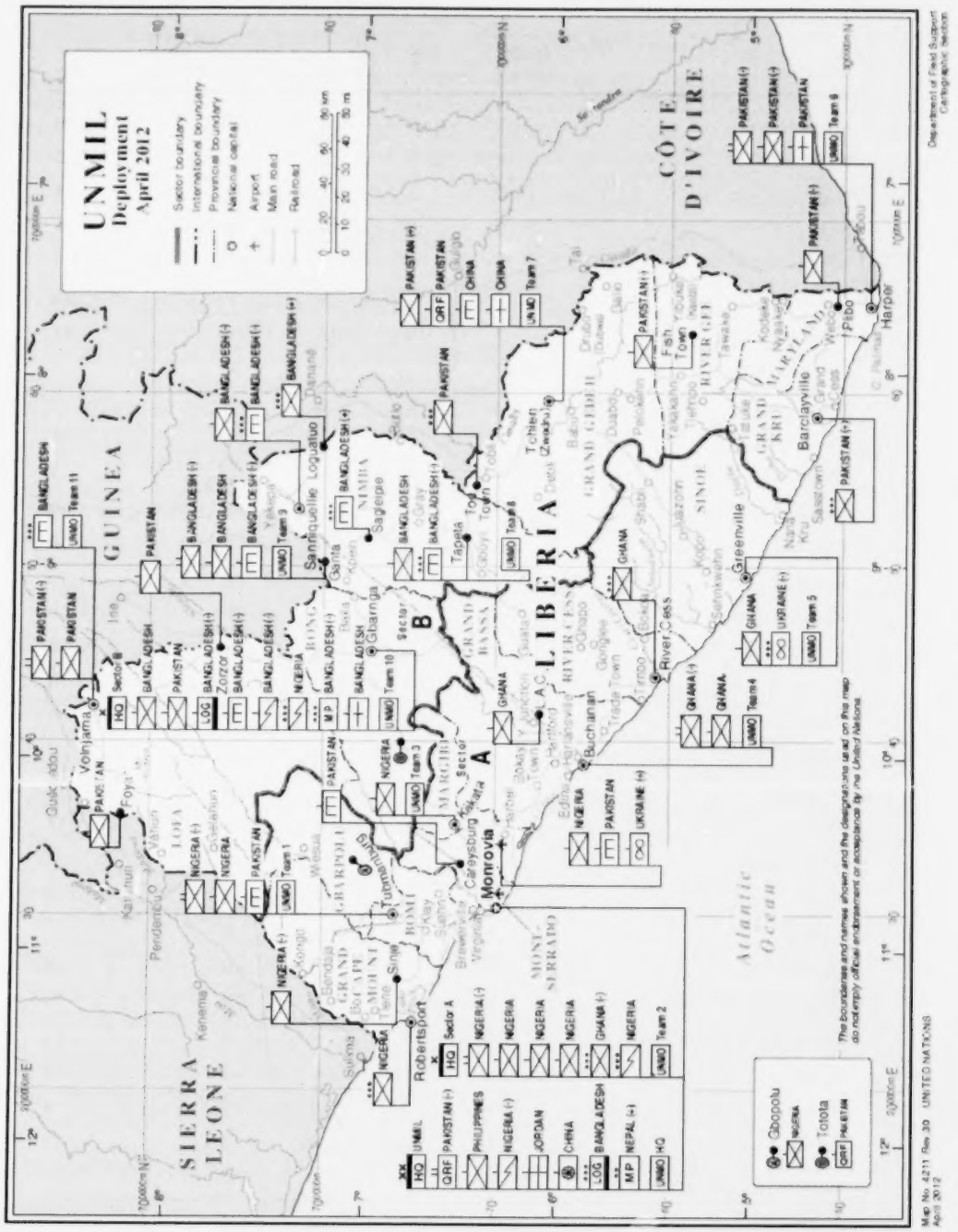
Annex

United Nations Mission in Liberia: military and police strength

(As at 2 April 2012)

Country	*Military component*				*Formed police units*	*Civilian police*
	Military observers	*Staff officers*	*Troops*	*Total*		
Argentina	0	0	0	0		13
Bangladesh	13	7	1 431	1 451		13
Benin	2	1	0	3		0
Bolivia (Plurinational State of)	2	1	0	3		0
Bosnia and Herzegovina	0	0	0	0		7
Brazil	2	2	0	4		0
Bulgaria	2	0	0	2		0
China	2	6	558	566		17
Croatia	0	2	0	2		0
Czech Republic	0	0	0	0		5
Denmark	3	2	0	5		0
Ecuador	2	1	0	3		0
Egypt	7	0	0	7		5
El Salvador	2	0	0	2		2
Ethiopia	9	4	0	13		0
Fiji	0	0	0	0		24
Finland	0	2	0	2		0
France	0	1	0	1		0
Gambia	3	0	0	3		21
Germany	0	0	0	0		4
Ghana	9	7	699	715		23
India	0	0	0	0	243	3
Indonesia	1	0	0	1		0
Jamaica	0	0	0	0		1
Jordan	4	5	115	124	240	11
Kenya	0	0	0	0		14
Kyrgyzstan	3	0	0	3		3
Malaysia	6	0	0	6		0
Mali	1	0	0	1		0
Mongolia	0	0	0	0		0

Country	Military component				Formed police units	Civilian police
	Military observers	Staff officers	Troops	Total		
Montenegro	2	0	0	2		0
Namibia	0	3	0	3		2
Nepal	2	3	15	20	240	11
Niger	2	0	0	2		0
Nigeria	11	8	1 558	1 577	120	9
Norway	0	0	0	0		10
Pakistan	7	10	2 942	2 959		18
Paraguay	2	1	0	3		0
Peru	2	2	0	4		0
Philippines	2	1	115	118		36
Poland	2	0	0	2		3
Republic of Korea	1	1	0	2		0
Republic of Moldova	2	0	0	2		0
Romania	2	0	0	2		0
Russian Federation	4	0	0	4		8
Rwanda	0	0	0	0		8
Samoa	0	0	0	0		0
Senegal	1	2	0	3		0
Serbia	4	0	0	4		5
Sri Lanka	0	0	0	0		14
Sweden	0	0	0	0		15
Switzerland	0	0	0	0		4
Togo	3	1	0	4		0
Turkey	0	0	0	0		27
Uganda	0	0	0	0		8
Ukraine	2	2	275	279		18
United States of America	4	5	0	9		13
Uruguay	0	0	0	0		4
Yemen	0	1	0	1		4
Zambia	3	0	0	3		18
Zimbabwe	2	0	0	2		35
Total	**133**	**81**	**7 708**	**7 922**	**843**	**456**


UNMIL
Deployment
April 2012
Sector boundary
International boundary
Provincial boundary
National capital
Airport
Main road
Railroad
GUINEA
SIERRA LEONE
LIBERIA
CÔTE D'IVOIRE
Atlantic Ocean
Monrovia
Buchanan
Greenville
Harper
Zwedru
Voinjama
Sanniquellie
Gbapolu
Totota
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April 2012
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Cartographic Section